

WASHINGTON D.C. - In an effort to press the Federal Communications Commission to adopt new broadcast and cable equal employment opportunity (EEO) guidelines, members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) submitted a letter to Chairman Michael Powell calling for fair and effective EEO rules that would support the integration of women and minorities into the communications industry.

In January 2001, the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals labeled previous EEO rules as unconstitutional, finding them insufficiently written to properly address the FCC's efforts to prohibit race and gender discrimination in broadcast and cable employment. Since that ruling, there has been an outpouring of efforts to reinstate proper, constitutionally sound EEO guidelines.

To address this issue, the FCC held an *en banc* hearing yesterday to assist the commission in its examination of the EEO rules applicable to broadcast and cable entities. The commission heard from executives and managers in the broadcasting and cable sectors, as well as leaders of public interest organizations.

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30), Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus's Telecommunications and Technology Task Force, was the original author and leader of the effort to submit a letter on behalf of all three caucuses to the FCC as part of the hearing record. He was pleased with the outcome of today's hearing. "The *en banc* hearing was a crucial first step in addressing this issue," Rep. Becerra said. "It is my hope that the FCC commissioners will now take what they learned yesterday and quickly adopt new EEO guidelines that will level the playing field for women and minorities in the broadcast and cable industries."

The letter submitted by the caucuses was referenced numerous times during the course of the FCC's hearing. In his opening remarks, Commissioner Michael

Copps borrowed a line from the letter saying, "Diversity is the backbone and strength of our great nation, and diversity provides the opportunity for us to become an even greater nation."

The text of the Tri-Caucus letter to Chairman Powell is as follows:

June 21, 2002

The Honorable Michael Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission

Dear Chairman Powell:

As Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, we applaud your commitment to implement Equal Employment Opportunity rules by the end of 2002. Diversity is the backbone and strength of our great nation, and diversity provides the opportunity for us to become an even greater nation. We encourage you to adopt fair and effective EEO rules that will support the continued integration of minorities and women into the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulated communications industry.

The FCC has the monumental responsibility under the current

Telecommunications Act of regulating the communications industry to ensure that the finite space on the radio frequency spectrum is utilized in the public interest. We, representing over 78 million minority Americans, urge the FCC to take affirmative steps to ensure that broadcasters and cable entities do not discriminate against current and prospective employees and that they eliminate barriers predicated upon race, ethnicity, and gender. These two objectives in the furtherance of the public interest can be accomplished only through enactment of substantive EEO rules and subsequent vigorous FCC oversight.

The FCC has publicly stated on several occasions and most recently in its December 13, 2001 announcement of its intent to propose new EEO rules for broadcast and cable entities that EEO enforcement is necessary and important to the communications industry. The Minority Media and Telecommunications Council has presented evidence to show that the employment of minorities and women will have to grow dramatically for another four generations at its current rate in order to eliminate the consequences of discrimination. Communications company employment at the Board of Director, executive, management, administrative, procurement, and programming levels reveals an almost ethnically homogeneous industry. Given the 2000 Census which estimates that American minorities number over 81 million (with over 34 million Latino Americans, over 34 million African Americans, over 10 million Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians, and over 2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives), we encourage the FCC to set forth tangible EEO guidelines applicable to broadcast and cable entities.

The value to the public of having the FCC collect and disseminate EEO data is obvious and cannot be overstated. We encourage the FCC to issue EEO rules that will promote substantive action to remedy the

consequences of decades of unequal opportunity. It is our hope that, once issued, the EEO rules will be fairly and ambitiously implemented by broadcast and cable entities.

EEO compliance is one of the few affirmative obligations that the communications industry must accept in exchange for the protected use of our nation's radio frequency spectrum. We appreciate the opportunity to express our views regarding the critical role that EEO rules must play in the furtherance of the public interest and look forward to working with you and broadcast and cable entities to achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

Xavier Becerra (CA - 30) Silvestre Reyes (TX - 16) Bobby Rush
(IL - 1)

Albert Wynn (MD - 4) David Wu (OR - 1) Michael Honda
(CA - 15)